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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR KHALILZAD MEETS DEPUTY PM SHEIKH HAMDAN

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MICHELE J. SISON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Summary: On June 15, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad met with Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed (HbZ) and urged the UAEG to engage the newly formed government in Iraq. He also outlined USG support for PM Maliki's goals of eliminating militias, and promoting national reconciliation. HbZ welcomed the opportunity to invite members of Iraq's government on official visits to the UAE. HbZ also expressed interest in the UAE hosting an energy sector conference for Iraqi participants, and restated the UAEG's commitment to forgiving most of Iraq's debts, noting that there was not yet GCC consensus on that issue. HbZ reported that the UAEG was politically engaged in trying to improve relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. HbZ also expressed concern over the regional presence of Somali illegal-alien, noting that they may bring Islamic fundamentalism with them to the UAE. End Summary.

2.(C) HbZ was accompanied by his chief of staff, Sultan Al-Romeithy, and Colonel Hamad Al-Shamsi, State Security Directorate. Ambassador Khalilzad was accompanied by Ambassador Sison. Iyad Allawi accompanied Ambassador Khalilzad from Iraq and joined the meeting at its conclusion.

Iraq Reconstruction/Reconciliation

3. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad briefed HbZ on the new Iraqi government, noting that Iyad Allawi had just accepted the job as Secretary General of the Policy Council the night before. Khalilzad stated that there needs to be increased engagement by Arab nations in order to counter Iran's influence. He suggested that the UAEG invite Prime Minister Maliki and others to make official visits to the UAE. HbZ agreed, but noted that the UAEG had a "bad experience with Tarik Al-Hashimi" during the recent hostage crisis involving UAE diplomat Naji Al-Naoimi. HbZ stated that al-Hashimi failed to return any calls from the UAEG, and that they had made at least six attempts to contact him. (Note: HbZ extended a telephone invitation to PM Maliki on June 16. End Note.)

4. (C) Khalilzad explained that the next six months were critical in reconciling understanding between the government and the insurgents, pointing out that there is an important role for regional players to play in increasing the dialogue and understanding between factions. Khalilzad told HbZ that the disbanding of the militias is an essential part of the reconciliation process. HbZ stated that the issue of disbanding the militias is of "great concern to us," and inquired what strategy is proposed.

5. (S) Khalilzad explained that in order for a DDR strategy to work, resources would be needed. Colonel Hamad agreed that the militias have to be eliminated, emphasizing the need to remove "bad elements" from the Ministry of Interior at the same time, in order to bring "any sense of control" over the insurgents. Hamad noted that many Sunni had fallen into a virtual warlord state, but suggested that the UAEG may have an opportunity to play a significant role in calming the insurgents by working through the Sunni alliance.

6. (S) HbZ added that the UAEG wants to be involved but stressed the importance of there being a coordinated effort within the "group of six" (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kuwait, Jordan, and Egypt). He stated that the UAEG has good relations with the Shi'a councils from the south, characterizing them as "nationalists." He suggested that there be a collective effort to support them by helping them establish television and radio stations, etc. HbZ agreed that they could be a very effective influence, and that "We have to concentrate on bringing Iraqi Shi'a nationalists into our camp." Khalilzad replied that it was important to shift the dialogue away from sectarian ties and that reconciliation efforts must be framed as Sunni and Shi'a moderates against the extremists. He re-emphasized the need to focus on a reconciliation agenda. HbZ queried when provincial elections would likely be held. Khalilzad briefed him on the issues surrounding the timing of the elections.

Economic Issues

17. (C) Khalilzad requested UAEG assistance in encouraging economic (especially oil industry) leaders, both regional and international, to invest and work in Iraq, as Iraq needed to sustain and expand oil production and exports. He outlined the concept of an international compact for Iraq. He also suggested that a conference might be beneficial and asked if the UAE would host such an event. HbZ agreed, and promised to confer with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ) in this regard. (He called Khalilzad the next day to report that the Crown Prince had approved this idea.)

18. (C) Khalilzad urged the UAE to take the lead in the GCC on the issue of Iraqi debt forgiveness, suggesting that the GCC go at least as far as the Paris Club in forgiving Iraqi debt. Without answering, HbZ inquired what Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had committed to do. HbZ then added that the UAEG does not have any problem with waving debt "in principle," noting that the UAE had previously committed to former Secretary Baker to waive most of the debt. However, "Saudi Arabia does not agree with us on this issue." Khalilzad reported that he recently had been in Doha, and that the Amir had proposed forming a GCC-funded Iraqi Development Bank. Note: The Qataris had mentioned USD 4 billion in GCC capital. HbZ offered no comment on this proposal. End Note.

Other Concerns) Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Somalia

19. (S) HbZ told Khalilzad that UAE's efforts to mediate between Afghanistan and Pakistan were on track. He said that his brother, Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed (AbZ), had reported that the June 15 meetings between Karzai and Musharraf had gone "very well." The two had agreed to "calm the rhetoric" and to hold a meeting to coordinate arrangements for "watching the borders." The Afghan and Pakistani intel chiefs would meet later this week in Abu Dhabi, he added. HbZ said that his brother had characterized the Afghans as the "more rational and logical of the two parties," after having met FS Khan and FM Spanta earlier that day.

110. (C) Somalia: HbZ expressed concern that over 350 Somalis had been caught in Oman recently, supposedly having transited through Yemen. He stated that the UAEG is "very concerned about them," noting that there are significant extremist groups in Somalia, perhaps even active al-Qaeda cells, and that these aliens may bring a brand of unwanted Islamic fundamentalism with them.

11. (U) This message has been cleared by Ambassador Khalilzad.
SISON